



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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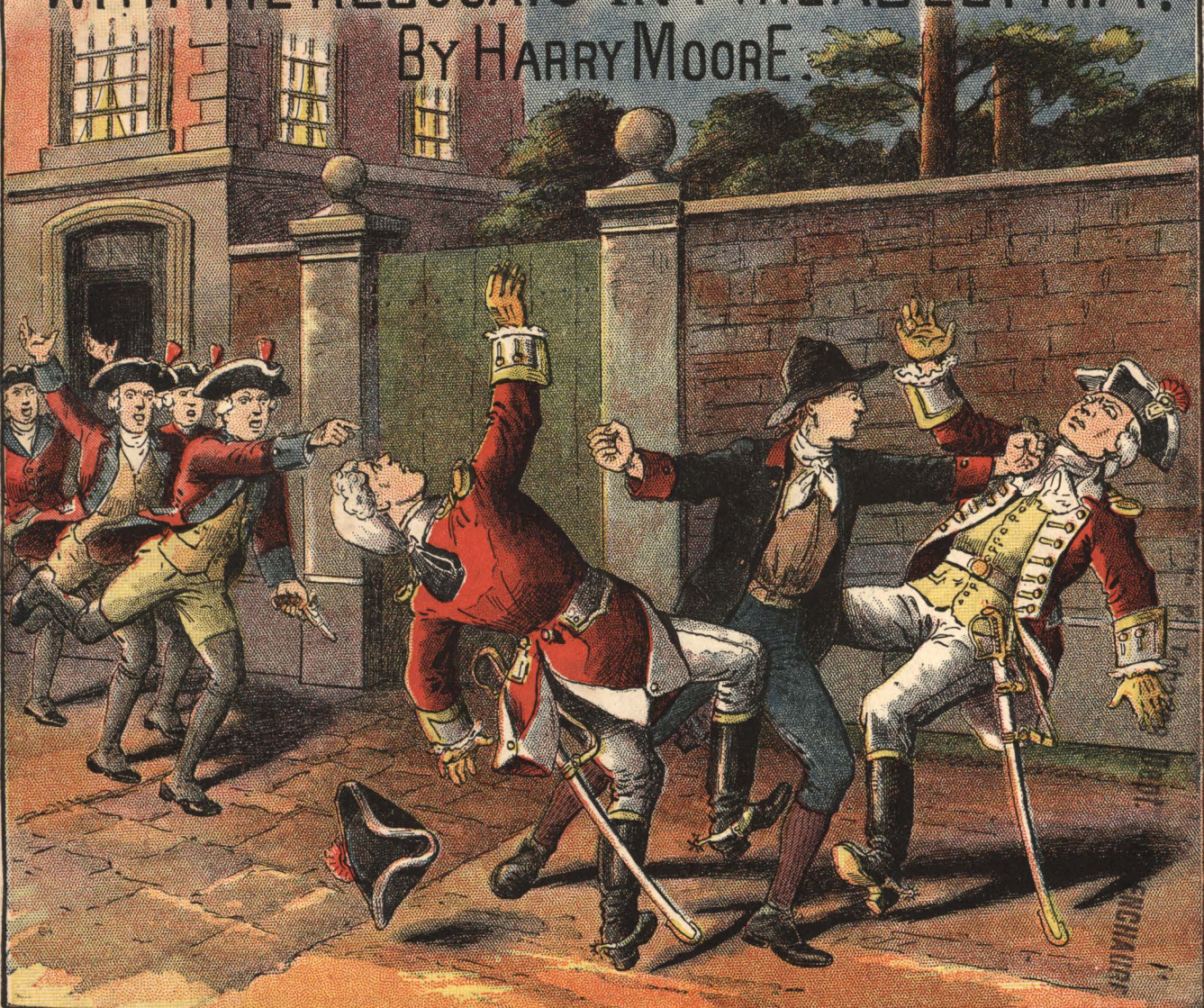
NEW YORK, JULY 5, 1901.

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NEW YORK, JULY 5, 1901.

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CHAPTER I.

AMBUSHED.

The battle of the Brandywine had been fought.

The British had been successful.

The patriot army had been defeated.

The British had lost as many men as had the patriots, but they had a much larger force, and could afford to lose more men.

The victory had been dearly won, however.

The patriots had been defeated, and forced to retreat toward Philadelphia, but they were still full of fight.

The patriot army retreated slowly.

Behind it, following slowly along, was the British army.

The battle of the Brandywine had taught General Howe a lesson.

It had taught him to have the utmost respect for the fighting abilities of the patriot soldiers.

He had lost a thousand men in that battle.

He was not at all eager to begin another.

True, he was determined to capture Philadelphia, but he wished to, if possible, capture the city without having to engage in another battle.

But could he do this?

He intended to try to do so.

So he followed along behind the retreating patriot army, and watched and waited.

It was remarkable that, although they had been defeated, the patriot soldiers were not a whit discouraged.

They had lost much of their baggage.

Tents, blankets, articles of clothing had been left behind.

Hundreds were barefooted.

Yet they were cheerful, and had the British made an attack, they would have met with such resistance as would have astonished them.

But Howe did not intend to offer battle, if there was the least chance of securing the prize for which he was working—Philadelphia—without doing so.

At last the armies were at a point about eighteen miles west of Philadelphia.

The British army began a march northward, by a little eastward.

This direction, if followed a few miles, would bring them to a well-known ford across the Schuylkill River.

Washington made up his mind that Howe intended crossing the river at the ford, and marching down upon Philadelphia from the north.

He accordingly crossed the Schuylkill, so as to be ready to meet the British, and offer them battle.

To General Washington's amazement, however, the British did not cross at the ford.

They reached the river at that point, but instead of crossing, they marched on up, along the west bank of the stream.

What could it mean?

Washington asked himself this question, but could not answer it.

Neither could General Greene, or any of the other officers offer an explanation.

"I admit that I am puzzled," said General Greene. "I cannot think why he would march on up the river, when as we know it is his ambition to capture Philadelphia."

"General Howe is always doing something which no one would expect a man in his position to do," said General Washington.

"True," agreed Greene; "that four hundred mile sail around and up Chesapeake Bay, for instance, to accomplish what might have been accomplished by a sail of seventy-five miles up the Delaware River."

"He is tricky, however," said the commander-in-chief of the patriot army; "we will have to watch him. He may have some ulterior motive in making this movement."

Then Washington beckoned to an orderly.

"Orderly," he said, "find Dick Slater, the captain of the 'Liberty Boys,' and send him to me at once."

The orderly saluted, and hastened away.

A few minutes later a handsome, manly-looking youth of perhaps eighteen years of age, appeared before General Washington.

This youth was Dick Slater, captain of a company known as "Liberty Boys of '76."

He was also famous as a spy.

He was the most daring and successful scout and spy in the patriot army.

Consequently he was a great favorite with the commander-in-chief.

Dick Slater saluted.

"You sent for me, Your Excellency?" he asked.

"Yes, Dick; I have some work for you."

"I am ready to go about the work at once, sir."

"I knew you would be. What I wish you to do is to cross the river and follow the British. I expected that they would cross the river at the ford, but they did not, and now I don't know what to make of their action in continuing on up the stream. I am suspicious that there is some ulterior motive concealed in the movement, and I wish you to, if possible, find out what it is."

"I will do my best to do so, Your Excellency," said Dick, quietly. "Shall I go at once?"

"At once, Dick."

Dick saluted, and returned to the point where the company of "Liberty Boys" were stationed.

A year before, while on a spying expedition over on Long Island, the British army being stationed there at that time, Dick had captured a splendid horse.

Dick had named the horse "Major."

This horse had just been brought into camp that morning by the men whose duty it was to take care of the horses not in use, and Dick sent one of the "Liberty Boys" to get Major for him, while he exchanged his uniform for a rough suit of citizen clothing.

It would not do to go on a scouting and spying expedition wearing the continental blue.

By the time the youth returned with the horse, Dick was ready.

Bob Estabrook, a member of the company, and Dick's nearest and dearest friend, wished to accompany Dick, but the youth thought it better that he should go alone.

Bob was plainly disappointed, but he did not insist.

He felt that Dick knew best.

Dick mounted Major.

Then, bidding the youths good-bye, he set out.

He rode to the ford, and started to cross.

He was about half way across, when there came the sharp crack of a musket, and a bullet whistled past Dick's head.

Dick was startled.

He had not been expecting anything of this kind.

He did not turn back, however.

Instead, he set his teeth grimly together, and urged Major forward.

Somehow, he believed there was not more than one person on the other side of the river.

Had there been more than one, there would, he was confident, have been more than one shot fired.

Dick hoped to be able to get across the stream before the lurking foe could have time to reload his musket.

It took but a few moments to finish crossing, and then, as Dick rode up the bank of the river, he caught a glimpse of a man just within the edge of the timber.

The fellow was working with all his might to finish loading his rifle before Dick could reach him.

He did not succeed, however.

Dick urged Major forward, and was upon the fellow in a jiffy.

He drew a pistol as he drew near, and coming to a stop, covered the man with it.

Dick saw at once that the man was not a British soldier.

He was dressed in a rough, hunter-like costume, and was uncouth in appearance.

He was evidently greatly taken aback by Dick's sudden appearance, though he strove not to show it.

"Drop that gun," ordered Dick.

The fellow hesitated, and looked at Dick, and then around him.

"Drop that gun, at once, or die!" again ordered Dick.

This time his tone was so stern and grim that the fellow did not dare disobey.

He let go of his rifle, and it dropped to the ground with a thud.

"What ye comin' at me thet way, fur?" he asked, sullenly.

"Why am I coming at you in this manner?"

"Yas."

Dick looked the fellow straight in the eyes.

"I'd like to ask you a question," he said grimly; "and when you answer it, then, perhaps, I shall answer yours."

The fellow shifted his feet, and looked uneasy.

"Whut d'ye want ax me?"

"What I wish to ask you is this: Why did you shoot at me just now?"

The fellow avoided Dick's gaze, shifted uneasily and turned pale.

"Answer!" cried Dick, sternly.

He gave the pistol a shake, and the man threw up his hands, and cried out:

"Don't shoot, mister! Don't shoot!"

"Answer, and I will not shoot. Why did you shoot at me?"

"I—I—didn't shoot at ye, mister."

The fellow's voice trembled.

His teeth were chattering.

He was plainly terribly frightened.

"You didn't shoot at me?"

Dick's tone implied unbelief.

"No-o-o, mister!"

"What did you shoot at, then?"

"I—I—s-shot at a—a s-squirrel."

Dick laughed aloud.

This statement was so absurd, on the face of it, that he could not help it.

But his laughter had a stern, scornful ring to it that was more terrifying to the man than Dick's stern words had been.

"My friend," said Dick, in a particular, quiet, yet stern and threatening tone, "you are talking to one who has hunted since he was big enough to carry a rifle, and who has killed hundreds, yes thousands of squirrels, and I must tell you that I am well aware of the fact that the man who shoots a squirrel, always shoots upward, into the top of a tree. The bullet you fired, a few minutes ago, whistled past my head, when I was out on the middle of the river. So your story of shooting at a squirrel is false on the face of it. You tried to kill me!"

The fellow turned paler still.

He began to realize, now, that he was in a dangerous position.

"D-don't s-shoot me!" he stammered; "I—I—didn't mean ter kill ye, only make ye go back."

"Why did you wish me to go back?"

"W'y, I didn't keer whether er not ye come ercross, er whether ye didn't, but one uv them sojers whut went erlong erwhile ergo, he sed ter me thet ef I'd stay heer at ther ford, an' shoot enny feller ez tried ter come ercross, he'd giv' me er gol' sovrin, an' I sed I'd do et."

"Ah. So that was the way of it, eh?"

"Yas; he giv' me ther sovrin, an' I stayed heer, an' when ye kim erlong, I thort I'd skeer ye back; so I ups an' shoots cluss ter ye. I didn't try ter hit ye, I'll sw'ar I didn't. Ef I hed wanted ter, I c'u'd er done et. I kin hit er squirrel at thet distance. I jes' thort I'd skeer ye, and make ye go back; but ye didn't skeer wuth er cent."

Dick eyed the fellow closely while he was talking, and made up his mind the man was telling the truth.

"Well, my friend," he said, when the other had finished his explanation, "I will say that I believe you are telling the truth. I must say, however, that I believe you to be a man who sympathizes with the British; in other words, a Tory."

"No, I hain't, mister!—I sw'ar I hain't!" the fellow cried, hastily.

"Are you sure?"

Dick eyed the fellow searchingly.

"I sw'ar et, I tell ye! I hain't no Tory."

"Very well," said Dick; "I shall accept your statement as being true, and I am going to let you go free—this time. I advise you, however, to keep away from the British, and have nothing more to do with them. If you are caught aiding them in any way, shape or form, another time, you will be shot. Do you understand?"

"Yas, mister. I'll keep erway frum ther Britishers, an' I won't he'p 'em no more!"

"See to it that you do not. Now pick up your rifle and go."

The fellow picked up his rifle, and with a nod, hastened away through the timber. Evidently he was glad to escape so easily.

Then Dick rode away in the direction taken by the British army.

CHAPTER II.

A DANGEROUS ERRAND.

It was not difficult for him to overhaul the British.

The soldiers were for the most part on foot, while he was on horseback.

Dick did not venture to approach very near, however.

He did not wish to risk being captured.

He would wait till nightfall, and then when the British went into camp, would try to slip into their encampment and learn something that would be of value to General Washington.

Presently, when Dick came to a hill, he paused, dismounted and tied his horse, and then climbed a tree.

He wished to get a view of the entire force of the British.

He was enabled to do so.

They were marching along up the river.

"I wonder where they are going?" thought Dick. "This is a very strange affair. I do not understand it."

Then Dick turned his eyes across the river.

As he did so a cry of amazement escaped him.

"Great Guns!" he exclaimed; "yonder is our army, nearly captured! And the men are moving northward on the double quick! I wonder what that can mean? I thought it was the intention of the commander-in-chief to remain where he was when I left him—at least until the meaning of the movement of the British army was fathomed."

Dick watched both armies for a few minutes, and then he made up his mind that he understood the meaning of the movement of the patriot army.

General Washington had decided to march along parallel with the British, and be in readiness to offer battle, should they attempt to cross the river.

Dick was only partially correct.

The fact of the matter was, that Washington had suddenly bethought himself that at Reading, which was some distance up the river, a lot of supplies for the use of the patriot army had been collected.

He made up his mind that in some way Howe had learned of this, and was on his way there to capture the provisions and other supplies.

Of course, the commander-in-chief of the continental army could not permit this.

The supplies were too valuable.

So he had at once given the order to march northward on the double-quick.

He must reach Reading ahead of the British.

The British had had considerable the start, but when Dick saw them, as told above, the redcoats were not more than half a mile farther advanced toward the north than the patriots.

But Howe was playing a deeper game than this.

It is doubtful if he even knew of the fact that the supplies were at Reading.

At any rate, it was not his intention to proceed there for the purpose of securing the provisions, etc.

But Washington could not know this.

He could only reason from surface indications, and there was absolutely nothing to be gained, so far as he could see, in going northward as the British were doing, unless they intended to capture the supplies.

So he acted just as he would have acted had he known that this was the intention of the British.

Dick descended from the tree, mounted his horse, and rode onward.

As he rode, he kept thinking of what he had just seen.

He wondered what it really meant, and why the patriot army was proceeding northward on the double quick.

The patriot army marched through Norristown, and on to Pottstown, both these towns being on the east side of the river, and the patriots were now fully abreast the British army.

Dick thought he had noted a disposition to lag, in the British ranks for the last half hour or so, and presently he discovered what this portended.

Suddenly the British army came to a halt.

It was at a point nearly opposite Pottstown, and was screened from the observation of the patriot army by timber.

The men quickly faced about, and to Dick's great surprise, started back southward on the double quick.

In an instant it flashed upon Dick what this meant.

The British were going to try to get back to Norristown, cross the river before the patriots could reach the point, and then march upon Philadelphia with nothing in their way to interfere.

He was confident this was Howe's plan.

"General Washington must be informed of this movement of the British immediately!" thought Dick, and he came down out of the treetop in which he had been perched, with a rush.

Leaping into the saddle, he urged Major toward the river.

"I must cross, and reach and stop our army at the earliest possible moment!" murmured Dick.

He was soon at the river.

He crossed and rode away at a gallop.

He soon overtook the patriot army.

He hastened at once to General Washington, and told him the news.

The commander-in-chief was surprised.

He was relieved as well.

"I see Howe's plan now," he said to General Greene; "he is going to hasten back to Norristown, cross to this side of the river, and march southward upon Philadelphia."

"Then we must hasten back and head him off!" exclaimed Sullivan.

The commander-in-chief shook his head.

"No," said the chief; "we will let him go. Our men are in poor condition, and we could hardly hope to be successful in a fight with them. They would capture Philadelphia sooner or later, and by letting them execute this move undisturbed, they will likely become careless, and will give us a chance at them a little later on. I am so relieved that they were not going up to Reading to secure our provisions, that I am quite willing to let them execute this maneuver undisturbed. Then, when they have moved southward, we will move after them, and keep our eyes open for an opportunity to strike them a severe blow."

"I think your plan is a wise one, General Washington," said Greene; "but don't you think it would be a good idea for us to face about and start back, as if trying to head them off?"

"I think so, General Greene. It will make them feel more exultant, and will conduce to making them more careless and confident in the future."

"So it will. Will you give the order now, your excellency?"

"At once!"

did so. The patriot army quickly paused, and then the men faced. When, at the order, they started again, and marched back the course which they had just traveled. They did not move at double-quick, however. General Washington had made up his mind to let them get across the river and put their plan in operation. When they were yet half a mile away from Norristown, the entire British army had crossed, and was marching forward, with banners flying and drums beating. We thought he had outwitted and outgeneralled his spy. It was, as a consequence, in high spirits. He laughed and joked with the members of his staff, boasted of how he had outwitted that "old fox of a King." "Philadelphia is ours!" he exclaimed, grandiloquently; "the rebel capitol is ours, and we will speedily bring the Tories to terms!" The others agreed with him, as in duty bound. The majority were of the same opinion, however, so they did not have to play the hypocrite in coinciding in the words of their commander-in-chief. The patriot army kept after the British for two days, then went into camp at a point about ten miles north of Germantown. The British went into camp at Germantown, which was about six miles out from Philadelphia. On the same day Cornwallis, with the other portion of the British army, marched into Philadelphia with banners flying, drums beating and his men dressed out in their best uniforms. He was accorded a royal welcome. The patriot citizens of Philadelphia had hastily packed up and left the city as soon as the news of the defeat of the patriots at Brandywine reached them. The result was that the Tories were in almost complete control when the British entered the city. A few patriots who had been very careful and had acted so as to make people think they were neutral had remained. They felt that they were taking chances, but they were willing to risk it, in order to escape the inconveniences and discomforts of flight and exile. They knew they would have to be very circumspect in their behavior, however. The Tories, as a matter of course, were delighted. They welcomed Cornwallis joyously. They cheered the British soldiers to the echo. The redcoats received an ovation all along the line.

This was indeed pleasing to the proud-spirited Cornwallis.

He sat on his horse with as much dignity and grace as could King George, whom he loved so well.

His heart swelled with pride.

He realized that in Philadelphia he and his brother officers would be able to spend a season of enjoyment.

Certainly the Tories would do their best to make things pleasant for the redcoats.

They imagined that it was only a question of time when the British would triumph, and the American people would have to submit again to the yoke of a tyrant.

So they welcomed this opportunity to toady to the redcoats.

There was no difficulty in finding quarters for the soldiers.

The city was full of untenanted houses—the houses left vacant by the patriots who had fled, and the redcoats took possession of these.

They could not have had things nicer.

They certainly appreciated it.

They had been on board Admiral Howe's warships for weeks, and then after landing, had been marching for several more weeks.

They had become very tired of all this.

Camp life was anything but pleasant.

To be quartered in comfortable houses was indeed a luxury.

The redcoats hoped that they would remain in Philadelphia a long time.

Their hopes were to be realized.

The majority of them were destined to remain in Philadelphia several months—but of that, anon.

General Howe came into the city that same evening.

He remained over night with General Cornwallis, and the next day both officers took a look over Philadelphia and then discussed the situation thoroughly.

General Howe was quite as well pleased as General Cornwallis had been.

He was very well satisfied.

Indeed, he was happy.

He had defeated Washington at the Brandywine and had captured Philadelphia. Why should he not be happy?

But General Washington did not intend to let the British rest easy, if he could help it.

He was determined to strike them a severe blow just when they were feeling the most secure.

To that end, he must learn how the British troops at Germantown were stationed.

This would be absolutely necessary, if he were to succeed.

To this end, the commander-in-chief sent for Dick Slater.

When he wished to learn anything regarding the British, he always sent for Dick.

The youth was always so successful that General Washington felt safe in sending him on the most difficult errands.

Dick was only too eager to go.

General Washington gave him full instructions regarding what he wished to learn.

Dick was to enter the British lines, if possible to do so.

He was to observe carefully the location of all the various troops.

He was to learn all he could, and then he was to return.

Dick felt that he would succeed.

He had done so before, why not again?

Dick felt that he had never gone on a more important expedition than this one on which he was getting ready to start, and he made up his mind to exercise all the care possible.

He must enter the British lines.

He must do so without his identity being suspected.

To this end he would have to be well disguised.

On two or three occasions Dick had rigged himself up as a farmer's boy, and he had found this to be the most effective disguise he had ever made use of.

He decided to make use of this disguise again.

He went to a farmhouse nearby and procured an old cast off suit of clothes.

Returning to the encampment, he doffed his uniform and donned the rough suit of clothes.

Arrayed in the old suit with heavy cowhide shoes and an old slouch hat, Dick looked the typical farmer boy of that region to the life.

At about three o'clock that afternoon he set out afoot.

He was headed southward.

In that direction, twelve miles distant, lay the British encampment.

Dick could easily walk three miles an hour, and this would take him to the British encampment by seven o'clock in the evening.

As he walked along the road, whistling a lively air, one would have thought he had not a care in the world.

No one would have suspected that this seeming country youth was the most noted spy in the patriot army and that

he was going upon an errand which might easily end in his death.

But such was the case.

CHAPTER III.

DISCOVERED.

Dick walked briskly onward.

As he had figured on doing, he reached the vicinity of Germantown by seven o'clock.

He paused and waited until it became dark.

Then he set out again and by exercising great caution, managed to slip past the pickets and get into town.

Of course, as he came from the north, he entered the town at the north side—or rather at the north end, the town consisting of one street a mile in length.

There was quite a hill at this point.

Dick reached the top of the hill and started south down the street.

He went but a short distance before stopping.

At the left hand side of the road, well back in the midst of extensive grounds, was a large house.

Light streamed from all the windows.

The sound of music came from the house.

"I wonder what is going on there?" thought Dick.

He decided to find out.

He had plenty of time.

In work such as he was engaged upon, he could not afford to pass anything by.

It was best to investigate everything that came up.

He had always found this to be the case.

It had paid him well to do so on more than one occasion.

He had secured valuable information where he had in reality expected nothing.

Dick climbed over the fence and made his way to the house.

He approached cautiously.

He feared there might be dogs about.

To have a barking cur come rushing out at him, would be unpleasant.

If there were any dogs about the place, Dick succeeded in evading them, however, for none put in an appearance.

Dick reached the house.

He took up a position at a window and looked in.

It was a gay and lively scene upon which his eyes rested.

The room into which he looked was a large one.

In the room were many gentlemen and ladies.

There were a few gentlemen in citizens' clothes, but the majority wore the uniforms of British officers.

The ladies were finely dressed and many of them were beautiful.

"Ah! I think I understand," thought Dick. "This is the home of some Tory—evidently a rich one—and he is giving a reception in honor of the British."

Among the officers, Dick saw Generals Howe and Cornwallis.

These two gentlemen seemed to be enjoying themselves very much.

In fact, this was the case with all the officers.

The ladies, too, seemed very well pleased.

The bright, brilliant uniforms, the gold braid and epaulettes seemed to catch their fancy.

As Dick looked upon this, a feeling of bitterness came over him.

Here were the British officers at a grand reception, enjoying themselves hugely while the patriot officers and soldiers were forced to sit and lie about camp fires out in the open air exposed to all kinds of weather.

They were poorly clothed, hundreds of the soldiers being barefoot and half the time they did not have enough to eat.

Dick did not like Tories anyway.

He thought a great deal less of them than he did of the British, and the sight upon which he was gazing did not lessen his dislike for Tories.

"I hope the day will come when such men as the owner of this house will have occasion to repent in sackcloth and ashes having aided and abetted the British in this manner," thought Dick.

He watched the scene for perhaps ten minutes.

Then he turned away from the window.

As he did so, a stern voice greeted his hearing.

"Halt! Hands up!"

Not ten feet distant stood a British soldier.

He was plainly visible in the light which streamed out through the window.

The redcoat held a musket in his hands.

It was leveled full at Dick's head.

Dick was astonished and somewhat startled.

But he was not dismayed.

He had been in too many dangerous situations to quail before the muzzle of a musket.

In such instances as this, Dick's mind always acted very swiftly.

In an instant, almost, his mind grasped the full situation, and he decided upon his course of procedure.

He remembered that he was disguised as a farmer's boy.

This being the case, it would be necessary for him to act as a farmer's boy would probably act under the same circumstances.

A farmer's boy would certainly be frightened.

So Dick pretended to be terribly frightened.

He raised his hands above his head, and his legs shook so violently as to make the onlooker think their owner was about to fall to the ground.

"D—d—don't ye shoot, mister!" said Dick in a trembling voice. "I—I—h-hain't be'n d-doin' nothin', mister!"

"You haven't been doing anything, eh?"

"N-no, mister."

"Weren't you looking through that window just now?"

"Y-yes, mister; but there wuzn't enny harm in that, wuz there?"

"Well, I don't know about that. Why were you looking in there?"

"I wanted to see what they wuz doin', mister."

"Oh, you did?"

"Yes, mister."

"Who are you?" the British soldier asked abruptly.

"I'm Sam Billings."

"Sam Billings, eh?"

"Yes, mister."

"Where do you live?"

"Out in ther country."

"What are you doing in town at this time of night?"

"I came arter some medicine."

"Oh, somebody sick, eh?"

"Yes, mister; my brother is sick."

"Well, he's liable to die if you fool around here half the night peeking in windows. You don't seem to take his sickness very much to heart."

"Well, he ain't so very sick."

Dick had now become somewhat fearful.

As he looked at the redcoat, he became convinced that he had seen the fellow before.

In that case, the fellow had probably seen him.

This being true, the redcoat might recognize him at any moment.

Then there would be trouble.

Dick was careful to keep his back toward the light.

Also he kept his head dropped forward, so that his hat brim would shade his face as much as possible.

He made up his mind that he must get away from there as quick as possible.

To this end, he said:

"I guess I had better be goin', mister; my brother might be gettin' worse."

"Hum!" the redcoat remarked, drily; "you thought of that rather suddenly, didn't you?"

Dick was sure he detected an undertone of suspicion in the fellow's remark.

He began to feel somewhat alarmed.

"Well, ye made me think of it, mister," he said; "an' now that I have thought of et, I guess I hed better be goin'."

"Wait a minute," said the redcoat, "don't be in a hurry."

"I hain't been, mister."

"I'm aware of that," with a dry chuckle; "but as you have delayed this long, you might as well delay a little longer. I think I shall have to take a good look at your face before I let you go."

This was what Dick had feared.

"What do ye want ter look at my face for?" he asked innocently.

"Oh, I want to see if I know you."

"Ye don't know me, mister; I never saw you before, an' ye couldn't hev ever seen me afore."

"Well, I'm going to satisfy myself on that point, anyway. You might be a rebel spy in disguise."

"Oh, but I hain't, mister."

"Maybe not; we'll make sure, however. Push your hat back and turn around so the light will shine on your face."

Dick asked himself what he should do.

If he refused to do so, the redcoat would, of course, at once stamp him as a spy.

He would then have to fight for his freedom.

There would be a disturbance.

The house was full of British officers, while all around, at no great distance were hundreds of redcoats.

He would have difficulty in escaping.

Worse than that, it would put the British on their guard.

They would know a spy was in their midst.

They would be on the lookout, and it would be an extremely difficult matter for him to secure any information.

On the other hand, if he allowed the fellow to see his face, Dick feared he would be recognized.

Then there would be trouble just the same.

On the whole, however, there was a chance that the redcoat would not recognize him.

So Dick thought it worth while to take advantage of the chance.

If he refused, he was sure to get into trouble; if he did not refuse, he might escape.

So he decided to obey the order of the soldier.

He pushed his hat back, and turned so that the light shone upon his face.

The soldier looked at Dick for several minutes.

At first there was so sign of recognition on his face.

Presently a puzzled, perplexed look appeared in his eyes.

He took a step nearer, and looked at Dick's face very closely and searchingly.

Dick set his teeth hard.

He felt that he was about to be recognized.

And he was preparing for the struggle which would come immediately afterward.

The redcoat knitted his brows.

"I've seen you before, somewhere!" he declared, positively.

"I don't think ye hev, mister," said Dick.

"Yes, I have!"

"Ye mebbly hev seen somebuddy whut looked like me."

"No, sir; I have seen you!—but where, that's the question?"

"Ye shorely mus' be mistook, mister."

"No, I am not!"

Dick said no more.

He felt that it would do no good.

Then, too, the fellow might remember his voice.

He simply stood there, firm and silent, and waited.

He stood the scrutiny unflinchingly.

There was nothing in his outward appearance to indicate that he was on terrible nervous strain.

But such was the case.

He wished the redcoat would get through looking at him.

"It'll all come back to him in a flash, presently," thought the youth; "and then the trouble will begin."

This proved to be the case.

Suddenly Dick, who was watching the fellow as closely as the fellow was watching him, saw the light of recognition flash into the soldier's eyes.

An exclamation escaped the redcoat.

"I have it!" he cried, his voice ringing out triumphantly; "I know who you are now! You are Dick Slater, the rebel spy!"

CHAPTER IV.

A BOLD PLAN.

It had come!

Dick was recognized!

He could not avoid trouble.

If he escaped capture, he would have to act promptly and effectively.

Dick did so.

As the redcoat uttered the words, "You are Dick Slater, the rebel spy," Dick caught hold of the musket with his left hand, and with his right dealt the redcoat a terrible blow full on the jaw.

A cry of pain escaped the fellow.

He went down like a log.

Dick whirled around on his heel, at the same time bringing the musket around in a wide sweep.

Then he let go of the weapon, and it went flying away into the darkness.

There was a thud, and a wild cry of pain.

The musket had struck some one who had undoubtedly been hastening to the spot.

"Well, there's one astonished redcoat, anyway!" thought Dick, grimly.

Dick lost no time in getting away from there.

He hastened around the corner of the house.

He found himself at the rear.

He stumbled against something.

He discovered that it was an outside cellarway.

A thought struck Dick.

Might he not get into the house by way of the cellar?

He would try.

He lifted one of the slanting doors, and made his way down the steps, letting the door down over him as he went.

He found the latch of the door which opened into the cellar.

He lifted the latch and pushed against the door.

It opened!

"Good!" thought Dick; "I was afraid it would be bolted!"

He passed through into the cellar.

It was so dark in there that he could not see his hand before his face.

This did not matter, however.

He could feel his way about.

Just as he passed through the doorway, he heard the sound of footsteps outside.

He could hear excited voices also.

"The fellow I knocked down has given the alarm!" thought Dick.

Then Dick bethought himself that the redcoats might investigate the cellarway.

He quickly closed the door.

As he did so, he heard one of the cellar doors come open.

Dick felt about quick and carefully.

He found a couple of bolts.

He shot them into place.

None too soon, however.

He heard steps of someone coming down the cellarway.

Then he heard some one lift the latch.

Whoever it was, tried the door.

Of course, it refused to open.

"He didn't come down this way," said a voice; "the cellar door is bolted on the inside."

Dick smiled as he listened.

"I am glad that you have come to that decision!" he thought. "It will make it easier for me to follow out my plans."

Dick heard the redcoats go back up the steps.

The outside cellar door went down with a slam.

"I am safe for the present," thought Dick; "now I wonder what sort of a place I have got into, anyway?"

He decided to find out.

He began feeling his way cautiously along.

He had to go slow.

He did not know what he might run into.

He searched around for several minutes, and made his way here and there, and finally he found the steps which led to the ground floor of the mansion.

He made his way carefully up the steps.

He tried the door at the top.

It opened to his touch.

He was careful to open it only a few inches.

He looked through the opening.

He was looking into the kitchen.

He had hoped to find the room unoccupied.

But he was disappointed.

There was a woman in the room.

Evidently she was the cook.

Dick hoped that she might leave the room presently, on an errand of some kind.

Then he would slip out, and try to make his way upstairs.

For he had thought of a plan which he thought would prove to be a good one.

He knew that he was in a large house.

It was at least two and a half stories high.

Dick thought that he would be able to get a bird's eye view of the entire encampment of the British from the attic of the building.

And he had made up his mind to slip upstairs.

He would go up into the attic, remain all night, and then on the morrow he could take observations, and make

plans of the positions of the various divisions of the British army.

Dick pulled the door almost shut.

He left only a very small crack, through which he could keep watch.

He waited at least half an hour.

Then his patience was rewarded.

The cook left the kitchen in response to a call from another room.

This was Dick's opportunity.

He embraced it.

In a case of this kind, decisive and prompt action was absolutely necessary.

It would not do to hesitate.

The spy who would hesitate to act would be a failure.

And Dick was far from being a failure.

He opened the door quickly and noiselessly.

He stepped out into the kitchen, closing the cellar door behind him as he did so.

Dick was sure that there would be a back stairway leading from the kitchen to the upstairs rooms.

And he was right.

He saw the door leading to the stairway at a glance.

He hastened across the kitchen.

He went on tiptoe, so as to make no noise.

In crossing the room, he passed a table on which were dozens of fine cakes and pies.

Dick understood what this meant.

There was to be a grand banquet held that evening.

These fine cakes and pies, and other good things were intended for tickling the palates of the British officers.

Dick was hungry.

He had had no supper.

He made up his mind that he might as well have some of the good things as to let the redcoats have them all.

So he grabbed up three pies and a cake.

On the table was a small pail filled with water.

Dick seized this, also.

He was thirsty even now.

He would be parched with thirst before morning, if he did not get some water to drink.

So he was glad of a chance to secure some.

Holding onto the cake and pies, and to the pail of water, Dick hastened on across the room.

Reaching the door, he opened it.

A glance up the stairway showed him that the coast was clear.

He passed through the doorway, and closed the door.

Then he began a cautious ascent of the stairs.

He made his way slowly up, and when he reached the floor above, he found himself in a hallway.

The hallway extended toward the front of the building but Dick had no desire to go in that direction.

He was afraid he might encounter some one who would give the alarm, and then his plan would be spoiled.

He decided to make his way to the attic without delay.

The continuation of the stairway, leading to the second floor, or attic, was close at hand, and Dick had no difficulty in finding it, as the hallway was lighted by candles placed at intervals of a few feet.

Dick opened the door, and passing through, closed it and made his way up this stairway.

It was dark here, and Dick had to feel his way.

When he reached the top of the stairs, he placed his cakes and pies and pail of water on the floor, and went back down the stairs.

He cautiously opened the door and looked out.

There was no one in the hallway.

Dick stepped out into the hall, and quickly appropriating a couple of candles, he hastened back.

He just did get through the doorway and get it closed in time.

A couple of British officers entered the hallway at the farther end, just as Dick pulled the door shut.

Had he been five seconds later, he would have been seen.

As it was, he escaped detection.

He made his way up to the top of the stairs, and began making an investigation.

As he had suspected, this was the main attic, and contained the servants' rooms.

It would not do for him to try to remain here.

He would be discovered, sure.

Dick felt confident there was a second attic, however, and he began looking for the stairs leading to it.

He found the stairs presently.

They consisted of a narrow flight of steps, running up at a very steep angle.

This did not matter to Dick.

He could climb them.

It did not take him long to carry his cake, pies and pail of water up the stairs, and when he had done this, he closed the door and bolted it.

"There! I feel better!" he thought, with a sigh of relief. "I don't think they will discover my presence up here, and I can take it easy until morning."

Dick had extinguished one candle, and by the light of the other he proceeded to eat his supper.

"This is somewhat richer food than I have been ac-

ustomed to," the youth thought, with a smile; "but I guess I can stand it for this once."

He enjoyed the pie and cake immensely.

There was plenty of water to last him till next day, and he felt that he was very nicely situated.

He almost laughed aloud as he thought of the surprise of the cook when she found one of her cakes and three of the pies missing.

"She will wonder where they have gone!" he thought; "well, I don't think she will find out in a hurry!"

Dick spent the night in perfect security.

He was wide awake when morning came.

The sun came up bright and clear.

There was a window in the room in which Dick had spent the night.

From it he could see the town, and the country for miles around.

There was another attic room.

In it were three windows, and he was enabled to see in the other directions.

He had paper, quill and ink, and he spent half the day taking observations and drawing up plans of the location of the various divisions of the British army.

When Dick had at last completed this work, he heaved a sigh of satisfaction.

"There," he murmured; "I think that with the aid of this, General Washington will be able to make an attack on the British with great advantage. Now, the next thing to do is to get back to him with it."

This was the thing, sure enough.

How was he to accomplish it?

Clearly he would have to wait till after nightfall to make the attempt.

He would not dare risk it in the daytime.

The afternoon moved away slowly.

It is always the case when one is waiting.

Dick did not suffer from hunger or thirst, however.

He had some of the pie and cake left and also some of the water.

Evening came at last.

Dick thought it best not to try to escape from the house at too early an hour, however, so he waited till about nine o'clock.

Then he decided to make the attempt.

He unbolted the attic door and made his way down the stairs to the floor below.

Seeing no one in the hallway he crossed it, and opening the door opening onto the stairs, he made his way slowly down.

Now would come the tug of war.

In order to get out of doors, Dick would have to go through the kitchen.

It would be difficult to accomplish this without being seen by the cook.

Dick opened the door at the foot of the stairs an inch or two and looked out.

It was as he had feared.

The cook was in the kitchen.

Dick's idea was to cross the kitchen to the door opening upon the stairs leading down into the cellar, and go down into the cellar and out the way he had come in.

But it would be impossible to do this as long as the cook was in the room.

He would have to wait.

This he did.

He had to wait at least an hour.

At the end of that time the cook having finished her work, extinguished the light and left the kitchen.

Dick waited only a few minutes longer.

Then he stepped out into the kitchen.

He made his way across the room, opened the door leading to the cellar stairs, and made his way down into the cellar.

It was very dark, but Dick did not have much difficulty in reaching the door leading to the outside cellarway.

Reaching the door he unbolted it.

He opened the door, passed through and made his way up the steps.

He lifted one of the outside cellar doors.

He lifted it cautiously.

He thought it probable that there were sentinels about.

His experience of the night before had taught him this.

It was almost as dark outdoors as it had been in the cellar.

He could not have seen a sentinel at a distance of three yards.

Dick stepped up out of the cellarway and was lowering the door when it slipped out of his grasp and went down with a crash.

"Jove! that'll bring somebody here in a jiffy," thought Dick. "I must get away from here in a hurry."

At this instant the sound of hurrying footsteps came to Dick's ears.

CHAPTER V.

THE BATTLE OF GERMANTOWN.

Dick did not delay an instant. He leaped away and ran at his best speed.

He ran in a direction diagonally away from that from which came the sound of approaching footsteps.

Suddenly Dick collided with something.

The something was a man.

Undoubtedly he was a British sentinel.

Dick collided with the fellow with such force as to hurl him to the ground.

The redcoat gave utterance to a cry of mingled pain and amazement.

Doubtless he wondered what had struck him.

Dick was brought almost to a standstill.

Naturally he was jarred considerably by the impact.

He gathered himself together again instantly, however, and bounded onward through the darkness.

"Halt! Hold on! Who goes there? What struck me anyway? Where are you? What are you? Who are you?"

Dick heard the redcoat give utterance to these disjointed questions, but he did not stop to answer.

Bang!

The redcoat had fired into the darkness.

Of course the fellow fired at random and the bullet came nowhere near Dick.

It would have been a great accident, indeed, had the bullet hit the fleeing youth.

Dick knew that he must be almost to the fence.

Fearing that he might run into it and hurt himself, he slowed down to a walk.

He extended his arms in front of him.

Presently his hands came in contact with the fence.

He leaped over the fence and made his way down the road.

He walked rapidly but very cautiously so as to make little or no noise.

The shot fired by the sentinel had caused considerable excitement.

Dick heard excited voices in several directions.

He did not know but he might run upon some redcoat at any moment.

He did not, however.

Luck was with him.

Then, too, he was going away from the British encampment.

The house which Dick had been in, and which he later on learned was the home of a Tory named Chew, was at the extreme north end of Germantown, and the British encampment did not extend any farther north than this, consequently Dick was outside the British lines as soon as he started down the road.

Dick was not challenged.

When he reached the foot of the hill he slackened his pace to a moderate walk.

He felt safe now.

There was no need of hurrying.

Dick knew that he had a long walk ahead of him and thought it best not to over-exert himself.

Dick walked steadily onward for more than four hours.

It was half past two o'clock in the morning when he reached the patriot encampment.

He went at once to his quarters and lying down was soon asleep.

He was up early next morning, and after breakfast he went to headquarters and reported to the commander-in-chief.

When General Washington saw the plan which Dick had drawn, showing the positions of the various divisions of the British army, he was delighted.

"You have done splendidly, Dick!" he said; "with the aid of this, I shall be able to arrange my plans as well as if I had been on the ground and seen the location of the British army myself."

"I think you will find the plan correct in every respect of your excellency," said Dick.

"I am sure of that, my boy; so sure of it, in fact, that I am going to use it as a basis for arranging my plans for making an attack upon the British."

And General Washington did so.

He called a council of war.

He showed the plan of the British encampment to the members of his staff.

The plans for attacking the British were arranged in detail.

It was decided to make the attack early in the morning of the 4th day of October.

On the evening of October 3d the patriot army broke camp.

It had been decided to attack the British at four different points at one and the same time.

When night came on, it proved to be very dark.

The road was quite rough and this made it hard work marching.

It was an especially difficult matter to get the cannon along.

Naturally, but slow progress was made.

It took the army all night long to march the twelve miles, and to make matters worse, along toward morning a thick fog set in.

As the patriot army neared Germantown, it divided up into four divisions.

The divisions parted company.

One went to the right hand and two to the left.

They were to move in a semi-circle and attack the British from the sides.

The largest division of the four, commanded by Washington himself, kept straight onward up the road.

It reached and ascended the hill on the top of which was Judge Chew's house.

Near the top of the hill the British pickets were encountered.

They fled and gave the alarm.

Soon the alarm became general.

The loud roar of cannon was heard.

Drums were heard beating, and soon the crash and rattle of musketry awoke the echoes.

The battle was on.

The British were taken entirely by surprise.

They had not been expecting an attack.

Being aroused out of their slumber in this manner, the redcoats were confused and disconcerted.

In the fog it was impossible to see what was going on.

This made it still more disconcerting to the British.

The British soldiers in the vicinity of Judge Chew's house rushed to it and entered.

The house was a large one and easily accommodated four or five hundred men.

As it was a stone house and very solidly built, it would be an almost impregnable fortress.

This move of the British was detected by the patriots.

An attack was made upon the house.

The British fired through the windows, however, and shot down a number of patriot soldiers.

The cannon were brought up and brought to bear upon the house.

The intention was to batter down the walls.

Shot after shot was fired and a number of the British soldiers were killed, but it was found that it was going to be a very difficult matter to batter the building to pieces.

Meanwhile the battle was raging fiercely at other points.

Dick and his company of "Liberty Boys" were in the thick of the fight.

They did splendid work.

They fought with the vigor and enthusiasm of youth and the coolness of veterans.

In truth, all the patriot soldiers fought splendidly, and but for an unfortunate accident history would have undoubtedly recorded a victory for the patriot army, instead of a defeat.

As we have said, a fog overhung all and made it impossible to see anything distinctly, even at a short distance.

As a result of this, a division of the patriot army under General Stephen encountered another division of the patriot army under General Wayne and mistaking it for a party of British, attacked it fiercely.

Wayne's men being attacked from both front and rear, tried to extricate themselves, and in doing so, came upon the left flank of Sullivan's division.

This caused great confusion.

Suddenly the men were seized with a panic.

They began to retreat.

The retreat soon became general.

The men soon got over their panic and the retreat was conducted in good order; the battle was ended and while the patriots had not been what might be termed defeated, yet they had failed to defeat the British.

The patriot army retreated to Whitemarsh, which was six miles from Germantown.

Here they went into camp.

The soldiers were not disheartened, for they had come within an ace of routing General Howe's army.

They were disappointed, of course, by their failure, but it could not be helped, and they made the best of the situation.

Washington had made his attempt and failed and now he established his army at Whitemarsh and waited for the British to do something.

The army was in bad shape.

Hundreds of the soldiers were almost naked.

Hundreds had no shoes.

Comparatively few had blankets and the nights were now growing cold enough so that there was much suffering.

It was an extremely difficult matter to get enough to eat.

The reason for this was obvious.

The farmers for miles around Philadelphia took all their produce to Philadelphia and sold it to the British.

The redcoats had gold with which to pay for the produce, while the patriots had nothing better than continental currency which was almost worthless.

Of course this forced the patriot soldiers to resort to foraging.

They had to have something to eat.

Of course, as far as they knew they confined their foraging tactics to the Tory farmers of the neighborhood.

Still it was a hard matter to get enough to eat.

There was hardly sufficient food in the surrounding country to feed an army.

General Washington hardly knew what to do.

Then, too, he had to be on his guard against an attack by the British.

As the days wore on and Howe made no attack, however, he became more and more ill at ease.

Why was Howe waiting?

Washington suspected that Howe and Cornwallis were laying some deep plot for his undoing.

Not wishing to be taken by surprise and consequently at a disadvantage, the commander-in-chief sent for Dick Slater.

"Dick," he said, "I am puzzled at the inaction of the British. I don't know what it means, but I wish to know, and I am going to ask you to go into Philadelphia and try to find out. Are you willing to attempt it?"

"I am, your excellency," was the prompt reply. "I am not only willing, but glad to do so. I will go to Philadelphia at once and find out what the intentions of the British are, if such a thing is possible."

"Good, Dick! I knew you would be willing to do this. I have never yet found you wanting."

"You have but to command, your excellency, and I will obey."

General Washington gave Dick a few further instructions, and then Dick left headquarters.

He returned to his own quarters and began making preparations for his trip to Philadelphia.

He doffed his continental uniform and donned the suit of clothes such as is worn by farmer boys.

"Where are you going, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook.

"To Philadelphia, Bob."

"To Philadelphia!"

"Yes."

"Right into the lion's den, eh?"

"Yes, into the British lion's den, Bob."

"You are going on a spying expedition?"

"Yes, Bob."

"Say, Dick, let me go along with you," cried Bob, eagerly.

"I'd like to have you go along, old man, were it not for the fact that I think I can do better alone."

"All right, Dick, just as you say. Be careful, though, and don't get into any trouble."

"I'll try and not get into trouble, Bob."

When Dick had finished making the change of clothing he went out, saddled and bridled a horse and mounting, rode away.

It was now about half past four in the afternoon.

It was twelve miles to Philadelphia.

Dick rode at a moderate pace and reached the city just as the sun was setting.

He rode to a livery stable, left the horse there and walked down the street.

"Well, I'm here," he thought. "Now to see if I can learn the plans of the British."

CHAPTER VI.

SPYING IN PHILADELPHIA.

Everywhere were British soldiers.

The streets were thronged with them.

The redcoats were a jolly lot.

To judge by their actions, they were certainly having a good time.

They marched up and down the streets talking, laughing and singing.

They were evidently having plenty to eat and also plenty to drink.

They occupied comfortable quarters.

There was no reason why they should not be happy.

Dick could not help drawing a comparison between these well-fed, well-dressed redcoats and his half-naked, half-starved comrades up at Whitemarsh, who instead of occupying comfortable beds in houses at night, had to lie on the cold ground.

A feeling of bitterness took possession of Dick's heart.

He wished that it might be possible for the patriot army to attack the British and drive them out of their comfortable quarters in Philadelphia, but he realized that it could not be done.

It was while in this mood that a redcoat bumped against him with such force as to almost knock him off the sidewalk.

The redcoat was a member of a group of five who were coming along the street in the opposite direction from that of which Dick was going.

That the redcoat had bumped against Dick purposely was evident, for he and his comrades set up a roar of laughter when they saw how nearly Dick had come to going off into the gutter.

Had the redcoat only known it, he had chosen a bad subject with which to have sport.

The time, too, was inappropriate.

Dick had just been drawing comparisons between the redcoats and his comrades, and his heart was filled with bitterness and anger.

Therefore the action of the redcoat was like putting the torch to a powder magazine.

"You cowardly redcoated scoundrel!" cried Dick in a tense, fierce voice. "Take that!"

"That!" was a blow straight from the shoulder.

The redcoat did take that, or more correctly speaking, perhaps, he received it.

He received it squarely between the eyes.

He went down as if he had been struck by a cannon ball.

Dick was very angry and had struck with all his might.

Cries of amazement and anger escaped the fellow's comrades.

"Go for him, fellows!" cried one. "Let's kill the country bumpkin!"

"We'll pound him to death!" cried another.

Then they attacked Dick fiercely.

Of course the four thought they would have no difficulty in disposing of the one and that one ostensibly a gawky country youth.

But they were to be speedily undeceived.

Dick's blood was up.

He felt as if he, single-handed and alone, could whip a dozen redcoats.

He met the fellows more than half way.

He dealt out blows with the speed of lightning flashes.

Almost before they knew what had happened, Dick had knocked the four redcoats down.

They scrambled to their feet and rushed to the attack again.

They were wild with rage.

They gave utterance to curses and threats.

The fellow who had been knocked down first, was the maddest one of the lot.

The combat would seem to be unequal, but it was not so unequal as it seemed.

The redcoats were blind with rage.

Dick was as cool as a cake of ice.

He did not show a trace of excitement.

He had full command of all his faculties.

The result was that he soon succeeded in knocking down the redcoats once more.

He had them piled across each other.

Of course the combat attracted the attention of passersby.

Soon a large crowd collected.

The crowd was largely made up of redcoats, but to their credit be it said, none of them attempted to take a hand against Dick.

Doubtless they thought that if five of their comrades could not prove themselves a match for one country youth, they deserved to be soundly thrashed.

The redcoats were not ready to give it up.

In fact, they were now thoroughly aroused.

They would have to give this youth a thrashing now or else be disgraced forever in the eyes of their comrades.

They could not hold up their heads afterwards.

They leaped to their feet.

Again they rushed to the attack.

They were determined to beat the audacious youth down by sheer force of numbers.

Had Dick been an ordinary youth they would no doubt have succeeded.

But he was not an ordinary youth.

He was a natural athlete.

He was alive, supple, active as a cat and quick as a flash of lightning.

In addition he was phenomenally strong, could deliver a blow stronger than most men were capable of delivering, and was moreover somewhat versed in the art of self-defense.

He was here, there and everywhere.

The redcoats found it practically impossible to strike Dick a blow that would do any damage.

He dodged, ducked, parried and evaded by leaping here and there, and the best that they could do was to strike a few glancing blows.

Dick, on the contrary, had no difficulty in landing upon his opponents, and he soon had them piled up upon the sidewalk.

A goodly portion of the crowd now applauded Dick.

Even some of the redcoats did so.

They could not help it.

Such magnificent work by one person against five demanded applause.

"It beats anything I ever saw," said one man in citizen's clothes.

"It is wonderful," said another.

"Indeed it is."

"I would not have believed such a thing possible, had I not seen it with my own eyes."

"Nor I."

The redcoats struggled to their feet once more.

They were considerably slower about this, however, than they had been before.

Dick's blows and the jar of contact with the pavement had dazed them somewhat.

They were now madder than ever, however.

More, they were desperate.

They realized that they were no match for the supposed country youth.

They decided to resort to the use of weapons.

As soon as they were on their feet, each drew a pistol.

"Kill the country lout!" cried one hoarsely.

"Shoot him full of holes!" cried another.

"We'll teach him to strike soldiers and gentlemen!" growled a third.

"Pretty soldiers and gentlemen you are!" cried Dick, in a clear, ringing voice.

His tone was full of scorn and defiance.

Dick realized that he was in great danger.

The redcoats were desperate.

They were wild with rage, on account of the manner in which they had been handled by the youth, and would not hesitate to shoot, he was sure.

But Dick did not flinch.

"Get out of the way there, you people who do not want to get bullets not intended for you!" cried one of the redcoats. "We're going to fire now."

Instantly there was a great scramble among the spectators.

Those who were behind Dick got out of the way with all possible speed.

Meantime Dick's mind was working with lightning-like rapidity.

What should he do?

He did not intend to stand there and allow himself to be shot down, but what was the best action to take to prevent it?

He had just decided to leap to one side into the midst of the crowd in order to avoid the bullets from the redcoats' pistols, when up to a level the pistols came.

Instantly Dick crouched to make the leap.

But he did not make it.

There came an interruption.

A British soldier wearing the uniform of a lieutenant leaped forward with drawn sword and placed himself squarely in front of Dick.

"Cowards!" he cried. "What do you mean? You must be mad! If you five men wearing the uniform of British soldiers, should so far forget yourself, should prove yourselves to be cowards, should disgrace the uniforms which you wear and the army to which you belong, by shooting down this unarmed youth, I for one should ever after be ashamed to acknowledge myself a member of an army having in its ranks even five such poltroons! You shall not disgrace yourselves, your uniforms and the British army in such fashion, if I can help it. If you kill this youth, you will have to kill me first!"

Instantly a great cry of approval went up from the crowd.

The spectators cheered the young lieutenant wildly.

His stand was approved by all with the exception, of course, of the five angry redcoats.

They were not pleased by his interference.

"What right have you to interfere, Shipley?" growled one of the redcoats.

"What right? The right of duty. I owe it to the British army and to myself as a member of said army to prevent you, who are also members of the army, from doing something which would bring disgrace upon British soldiers as a class."

"Bah! you talk like a preacher, Shipley!"

"No; I am talking common sense. I am willing to leave it to the crowd if this is not so."

"Of course it is!"

This went up in a cry from a score of throats.

"Put up your pistols!" cried others.

"Yes, yes! Don't make fools of yourselves!" from still others.

The five angry redcoats saw that the sentiment of the crowd was unanimously against them.

They felt that it would be unwise for them to press the matter further.

So they reluctantly returned their pistols to their belts.

"All right, lieutenant," said one; "I guess it will have to be as you say. I think it is a shame, however, that after being pounded up as we have been, we are not allowed to even up matters with that young scoundrel."

Dick gently pushed the lieutenant to one side, and taking a step forward, confronted the speaker.

"You will do well, sir, to be careful," said Dick, in a quiet, yet somewhat threatening tone. "You fellows began this affair, and I have simply defended myself, which is something that is every man's right and privilege to do. I give you fair warning not to apply an epithet to me again."

The redcoats made no reply in words.

They gave vent to low, angry inarticulate mutterings.

Had they desired, they would have leaped upon the bold youth.

But they did not dare.

They had tried this to their full and complete satisfaction.

At this instant a startling thing happened.

A British soldier who stood at the edge of the circle surrounding Dick and his opponents, and who had been watching Dick closely and listening to his voice, leaped forward and jerked the youth's hat off his head.

"Just as I thought!" he cried, eagerly and excitedly.

"This young fellow is Dick Slater, the rebel boy spy! I

have seen him before and know him well. Seize him!
Don't let him get away!"

CHAPTER VII.

DICK FINDS FRIENDS.

Dick was taken by surprise.
He realized that he was in great danger.
In the crowd surrounding him were at least a hundred redcoats.
He could not fight them all.
His only hope of safety lay in getting away from there before they could lay hands on him.
If the action and words of the redcoat had been a surprise to Dick, it had also been a surprise to the crowd.
All stared at Dick in open mouthed amazement.
They seemed dazed and for the time being, incapable of action.
Not so Dick.
He acted instantly.
Whirling, he darted into the crowd.
The crowd behind Dick had become considerably thinned out when the five redcoats drew their pistols, and Dick had not much difficulty in making his way through it.
As soon as Dick leaped away, however, the redcoats suddenly became aroused to the realities of the situation.
They had all heard of Dick Slater.
They knew that he was the most noted spy in the patriot army.
They were aware that General Howe had offered a reward for the youth's capture.
If they could capture him it would be a big feather in their caps and money in their pockets.
So they started in pursuit.
They raced after Dick like a pack of hounds after a fox.
They yelled for him to stop and threatened to shoot him if he did not.
But Dick did not stop.
He felt that he might as well be shot as captured.
If captured he would probably be shot anyway.
Or, worse yet, he might even be hung.
So the redcoats were merely wasting their breath in calling to him to stop.
Dick ran onward as fast as he could go.
Behind him came the redcoats.
It was now almost dark.

Dick wished it were darker still.
The darker it was, the better it would be for him.
"Stop him! Stop him!" cried the redcoats. "He is a rebel spy! Don't let him get away!"
A couple of redcoats coming up the street tried to stop Dick.
They speedily regretted doing so.
Crack! Crack!
With two well-directed blows Dick knocked the fellows down.
Then he darted down a side street.
Dick was a fast runner.
He drew away from his pursuers quite rapidly.
Reaching the next street, Dick turned up it.
This was more of a residence street.
There was not much stir anywhere.
Dick ran onward and attracted little, if any, attention.
He had nothing to fear save from his pursuers, and they were rapidly being distanced.
Suddenly as Dick approached a cross street, some one came bounding out and almost collided with him.
The some one was, as Dick saw at a glance, a boy of about his own age.
"I thought I'd head you off!" the boy exclaimed. "I was in the crowd around yonder and saw and heard everything. I am a patriot and live just up the street here. Come with me and we will hide you till the redcoats get through looking for you."
It was so dark Dick could not see the expression on the youth's face, but the tone was sincere and he decided to trust him.
"Thank you," said Dick; "lead the way and I will follow."
The youth ran diagonally across the street.
Dick kept close behind him.
They could hear the shouts of their pursuers but could not see them.
They kept on up the street a distance of perhaps three hundred yards.
Dick's guide paused in front of a house which stood well back from the street.
It stood among some trees and was just visible, that was all.
"This is where I live," said the boy. "Come on."
He opened a gate and passed through.
Dick followed.
Then the boy closed the gate and led the way to the house.
Reaching the house, he knocked on the door.
"Come in!" cried a voice.

The youth opened the door and entered.

"Come in," he invited, and Dick did so.

The boy closed the door and barred it.

Then he turned to a woman who had been sitting in a rockingchair in front of the fireplace, but who had risen as they entered, and said:

"Mother, this is Dick Slater, a patriot soldier and spy. The redcoats are after him, and I told him we would hide him."

"You are right, my son," said the woman.

Then she advanced and shook hands with Dick.

"I am glad to know you, Dick," she said. "You do not seem like a stranger, however. We have heard of you and your doings through my husband who is with General Washington's army. He has told us a great many stories regarding you and your adventures, when he was home for a few days a couple of months ago."

"What is your husband's name?" asked Dick. "I may know him."

"Dilworth; Tom Dilworth."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dick; "I know him well. There is not a man in the patriot army whose friendship I value more highly than that of Tom Dilworth."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed the boy in a cautious undertone.

"So you know my father?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Dick.

"How close were the redcoats?" asked Mrs. Dilworth.

"Do you think they saw you enter here?"

"I hardly think so, mother," said the youth. "They were not very close. We couldn't see them, and I don't think they could see us."

"I am glad of that," said Mrs. Dilworth. "I don't want to get the attention of the redcoats turned toward us if we can help it."

"But in case they should come, mother, where can we hide Dick?"

"In the secret room upstairs, Tom."

"That's so, mother, I had forgot about that. Let the redcoats come on if they want to. We can hide you where they couldn't find you in a week, Dick."

"Thank you, Tom; I'm glad to hear that," said Dick.

They listened intently for sounds of the redcoats.

They listened for perhaps a quarter of an hour but heard nothing to indicate the approach of the enemy.

"I guess they didn't see us come in here," said Tom, at last. "I think you may consider yourself absolutely safe now, Dick."

"I think so myself," replied Dick. "I think that, thanks to you, I am safe, Tom."

Then the three sat down in front of the fire and talk for some time.

Knowing he could place perfect confidence in them, Dick told Mrs. Dilworth and Tom what his errand was in coming to the city.

Mrs. Dilworth was greatly interested.

"I believe we are in a position to render you some assistance, Dick," she said.

"How is that?" asked Dick eagerly.

"I'll tell you. Our next door neighbor, living on the corner, is a strong patriot but the British adjutant-general is quartered in their house. I know that Generals Howd and Cornwallis and the other staff officers often come there and hold council of war in the adjutant-general's room. Mrs. Gordon—that is the patriot's name—was over this afternoon and she told me the adjutant-general had given her orders to have all the members of her family in bed early. She said that was the way he always did when there was a council of war to be held. Now, if you could be where you could overhear what was said, you could no doubt acquire some valuable information."

"I am sure of it!" exclaimed Dick. "Could you now arrange it for me, Mrs. Dilworth? I would give a great deal to overhear the conversation of the British officers."

"Perhaps I may be able to arrange it," said Mrs. Dilworth. "I shall be only too glad to try."

"I shall be very grateful to you if you will do so."

Mrs. Dilworth rose and put on her bonnet.

"I will run over and see Mary. It will take me only a few minutes."

She took her departure at once.

She was gone perhaps ten minutes.

When she returned, there was a pleased look on her face.

"You were successful!" exclaimed Dick, joyously.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Dilworth; "Mary was perfectly willing to let you enter the house for the purpose of spying on the British officers, even though she knew she was endangering the safety of herself and family by doing so. She is a brave and noble woman."

"Indeed she must be," said Dick, earnestly. "One thing is certain, I shall be very careful not to do anything that will lead to my detection and her exposure. I would not have trouble come to her or any of the members of her family as a result of this for anything in the world."

"I doubt if she would have agreed to let you enter the house, had I not told her who you were. She has heard a great deal about you and is willing to trust you, when she would not have been willing to trust a person of whom she had never heard."

This pleased Dick.

He was not at all vain, but it gave him a feeling of honest pleasure to know that he was held in such esteem.

"I don't think your friend will regret what she is going to do," said Dick, earnestly. "She certainly shall not if I can help it."

"She said for you to come over and hide near the house," said Mrs. Dilworth. "You are to remain hidden until after the British officers have entered the house. Then after a few more minutes have elapsed, you will give three light raps on the door, three times in succession. She will admit you at once and conduct you to a point whence it will be possible to overhear what is said by the British officers."

"Thank you, Mrs. Dilworth," said Dick. "You have been very kind to me, and if I succeed in securing any information of value to-night, I will owe it to you."

"Don't speak of it," said Mrs. Dilworth. "I have done only my duty, and if you succeed in securing valuable information, I shall be very, very happy."

"I guess I had better go now," said Dick. "I want to be on hand when those British officers begin holding their council of war."

"I judge you had better go," said Mrs. Dilworth. "Tom, you go with Dick and show him the way."

"All right, mother."

"You will come back here, will you not, Dick?" asked Mrs. Dilworth.

"Yes, I will stop and let you know what success I have had. If I secure any important information, however, I will remain only a few minutes. If I don't secure any information of value, then I may remain with you several days—provided you are willing that I should do so. I shall not return to the patriot army until after I have secured information of value."

"We shall be glad to have you remain with us as long as you care to do so," said Mrs. Dilworth, heartily.

"Thank you!"

Then Dick and Tom left the house.

Tom led the way, and they were soon in the yard of the next door neighbor.

They took up a position near the corner of the house.

"I'll stay till you go in the house, Dick," whispered Tom.

He was immensely interested.

He was patriot to the core.

He was delighted to think that he was doing something to aid the cause of liberty.

"All right, Tom," whispered Dick.

The youths waited perhaps half an hour.

Then they saw several dark forms approach the front of the house.

"There they come," whispered Tom, eagerly.

"I think so, Tom," whispered Dick in reply.

The youths said no more.

They watched, however, with all their eyes.

The youths could just make out the forms of the approaching persons, and they counted six in all.

The six newcomers halted at the front door and knocked. Presently the youths heard the door open.

Then they saw the six men disappear, one by one, through the doorway.

Then they heard the door close.

"Good!" whispered Tom. "They're in there, Dick. I only hope you'll secure a lot of valuable information."

"I hope so, too, Tom."

Dick waited about five minutes, and then he said:

"I guess I'll go in now, Tom. You had better run back home. I'll come straight over there as soon as I get through here."

"All right, Dick."

Tom made his way back in the direction of his mother's house, while Dick made his way to the front door of the Gordon house.

He gave three light raps on the door, and repeated this twice more at short intervals.

The door opened almost immediately.

It swung inward noiselessly.

All was dark within.

"Step softly," whispered a voice in Dick's ear. "Upon your life, don't make any noise."

Dick stepped through the doorway and into the house, his feet making no more noise than those of a cat.

As soon as he was inside, the door was closed again as silently as it had been opened.

"You had better remove your shoes and carry them in your hand," whispered the voice in Dick's ear.

Dick knew this was good advice.

He quickly removed his shoes, and taking them in his hand, whispered that he was ready.

Dick knew that his companion was a woman.

Of course she could be no other than Mrs. Gordon.

She took Dick by the arm.

"Come," she whispered; "I dare not have a light, so will have to lead you. We will move slowly so as to make no noise."

The two made their way slowly along until they came to a stairway.

Then they made their way up the stairway to the next floor.

They were in a hallway now, and they made their way along it slowly and carefully.

The farther they went the more cautious they became.

The woman whispered that they were nearing the room occupied by the British soldiers.

"The room adjoining the one they are in is empty," she said. "I am going to conduct you into it. There is a connecting doorway, but it is locked. You can listen at the keyhole and hear everything that is said in the next room."

"Thank you," whispered Dick; "that will do nicely."

Presently the woman conducted Dick through a doorway and into a room on the lefthand side of the hall.

"This is the room," whispered the woman. "You will be able to overhear everything that is said. Be very careful and don't let them discover your presence here."

"I will be careful," whispered Dick.

The woman glided out of the room and noiselessly closed the door.

Dick was in utter darkness, save for one point at the opposite side of the room, where a faint streak of light was visible.

This light, Dick doubted not, came through the keyhole in the door.

Bending down, Dick placed his shoes on the floor.

He exercised great care in doing so.

The least noise now would be fatal.

Dick stole softly across the room.

Reaching the door, he knelt down and looked through the keyhole.

Three of the men in the room were within Dick's range of vision.

One of the three was General Howe; the other two Dick did not know.

Dick looked but a moment, and then taking his eye away from the keyhole, placed his ear there.

In this case, hearing was better than seeing.

Dick listened to what was being said in the next room and it did not take him long to discover that in getting to spy upon the British officers on this night, he had met with a stroke of rare good fortune.

The British were planning to make an attack upon the patriot army.

Dick heard them talk their plans over in detail.

There was one thing, however, which he had not heard mentioned.

It was the date on which the attack was to be made.

This, of course, was the most important thing of all.

He listened closely feeling confident that he would soon hear this mentioned.

"By the way, General Howe," said one of the men in the room, "have you decided, as yet, when this attack will be made?"

It was coming at last.

Now Dick would learn when this attack was to be made.

He listened eagerly, intently.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK GAINS SOME VALUABLE INFORMATION.

"Well, I'll tell you," came to Dick's ears in General Howe's voice; "I had intended putting off the matter till the first of next week, but now I shall not do so. We will make the attack to-morrow night."

"To-morrow night!" thought Dick. "Ah! it is lucky I came to Philadelphia when I did."

It was evident that the other officers were surprised also.

"To-morrow night!" they exclaimed in chorus.

"Yes, to-morrow night."

"Why so soon?" asked one.

"I'll tell you why: Because Dick Slater, the boy spy, is in the city!"

"Ah!" exclaimed one; "that's true. You did receive a report to that effect, just before we started to come here, didn't you?"

"I did, and for that reason I am going to have no delay in putting our plans into execution. If we were to wait till the first of next week, the chances are that that young rebel would learn of our plans and carry the news to General Washington. By going to-morrow night, we will steal a march on him. While he is here in Philadelphia trying to secure information of our intended movements, we will march to Whitemarsh and take the rebels entirely by surprise."

Dick could not help smiling in a grim fashion.

"Will you, General Howe?" he thought. "Well, we'll see about that. You will not surprise the 'rebels' if I can help it, and I rather think I can."

The other officers seemed to think this plan of General Howe's a good one.

"That will be a good joke on Washington's bold young spy, won't it," said one.

"It will go a good way toward spoiling the reputation which he has made for being a successful spy," said another.

"So it will," remarked a third. "It will take him down several pegs."

"So I think," said General Howe in a tone of satisfaction. "And I admit that it will give me great pleasure to do this, as he has caused me a great deal of trouble during the past year."

"And I hope I shall live to cause you a great deal more trouble during the coming year," thought Dick.

Dick did not care to listen to their conversation longer.

He had heard all that was necessary for him to hear.

He had secured valuable information, and now the important thing was to get to General Washington with this information.

Dick guessed that General Howe and the members of his staff would remain there and talk for some time yet.

Taking this for granted, he made up his mind to leave at once.

He was in a hurry to get started back to Whitmarsh with the valuable information which he had secured.

Of course he had plenty of time, providing he was not delayed in any way.

He did not wish to take any chances.

He might have trouble in getting out of the city.

Leaving his position, Dick stole softly across the floor.

Securing his shoes, Dick cautiously opened the door and stepped out into the hall.

He made his way slowly and softly along the hall.

Reaching the head of the stairs, Dick made his way carefully down to the lower floor.

He made his way to the door, unbolted and opened it, and stepped out of doors.

He did not stop to put on his shoes, but leaped over the fence into the adjoining yard, and made his way to the house of Mrs. Dilworth.

He knocked on the door.

It was opened immediately.

The eager face of Tom was seen.

"So it's you, is it, Dick!" he exclaimed, excitedly; "come in!"

Dick obeyed, and he proceeded to put on his shoes, while telling Mrs. Dilworth and Tom of the complete success which he had had.

When they learned that Dick had secured valuable information, they were delighted.

They felt that they had had a hand in the affair, and this gave them great pleasure.

Dick told them that he owed his success to them, and thanked them heartily.

Then he got up, and told them that he must be going.

"I must take the news to General Washington at the earliest possible moment," he said.

His friends realized that this was important, so they did not insist on his remaining over night.

They were aware that the work of a spy was done largely at night.

Mrs. Dilworth gave Dick a message to take to her husband, and then Dick bade Tom and the noble-hearted woman good-bye, and took his departure.

He made his way down the street at a good pace.

He kept his eyes wide open.

He knew it was just at the time of night when the streets were thronged with the redcoats.

He knew them well enough to know that they would not think of going to bed before midnight.

So he would be in considerable danger while in the confines of the city.

Dick was careful, however, to keep off High street.

This was the main street, and the one most frequented by the redcoats.

The majority of the drinking houses were on this street, and the redcoats frequented those places quite a good deal.

Dick presently reached the livery stable where he had left his horse.

Paying his score, he mounted, and rode out of the stable, and away.

Dick thought he noticed some men who were standing at the entrance look at each other rather significantly as he rode out of the stable, but he did not give it much thought.

He remembered having seen them in the stable when he left his horse in there, and his idea was that they had noticed that he was wearing a different hat from the one he had worn.

Dick had borrowed an old hat from Tom Dilworth, as he had lost his, as the reader will remember.

Three men on horseback were coming up the street after him.

Dick could catch only an occasional glimpse of them, as they passed through a strip of light thrown out by a street lamp, but he was sure that in the three he recognized the men who had been standing at the entrance to the stable when he left there.

"I wonder why they are following me?" he asked himself.

Of course, he could not answer the question satisfactorily.

He thought it possible, however, that they were following him with the intention of trying to rob him.

"All right," he thought; "let them try it! They will have a hard time of it. I guess I will see if I can't run

away from them. That will be better than trying to fight them."

Dick urged his horse to a gallop.

He had now reached the outskirts of the city.

As it was a dark night, he felt confident that he would be able to get away from his pursuers in the darkness.

He looked back, and when the horsemen again appeared in the light, thrown out by a street lamp, Dick saw that they had urged their horses to a gallop, also.

"They seem determined to keep close to me," thought Dick; "well, they will have to ride fast if they catch up with me!"

Dick urged his horse to a swift gallop.

He was in a hurry to get to General Washington with the news of the intended attack by the British, anyway, and this but made still another incentive to rapid traveling on his part.

Dick presently made an unpleasant discovery.

The pursuing horsemen were overhauling him.

He could hear the hoof beats quite plainly.

"They must have good horses!" he thought; "they have drawn up on me very rapidly."

Dick urged his horse to a run.

He was determined to make it as difficult a matter as possible for his pursuers to overtake him.

He kept his horse at his best speed for a few minutes, and then slackened up a bit, and listened again.

He could hear the rapid hoof beats of the horses, and this time they sounded closer than before.

"They're still gaining!" Dick thought; "jove! I fear they will overhaul me in spite of all I can do!"

Dick made up his mind to make his pursuers work hard, however.

He urged his horse to renewed exertions.

The animal responded, and increased its speed to a considerable degree.

Dick began to have hopes that if his horse could keep this up, he would be able to keep his pursuers from catching up with him, after all.

He rode onward at this speed for several minutes, and then slackened speed again, to listen to the hoof beats of the horses ridden by his pursuers.

He could hear the hoof beats very plainly.

More plainly than before, he was sure.

"I guess I will have to give up the idea of keeping them from catching up with me," thought Dick; "there is only one way that I can hope to accomplish it, and that is by the exercise of strategy. I will either have to escape from them by the aid of trickery, or I will have to fight them."

Dick began studying the situation.

He must think up some trick that would give promise of foiling the plans of his pursuers.

This would undoubtedly be a difficult matter.

But Dick was a youth who never despaired, no matter how difficult a thing might seem.

He urged his horse to its best speed, once more.

Then he returned to the study of the problem which confronted him.

There was only one thing to do, so far as Dick could see.

That was to stop quickly, lead the horse out to one side of the road and wait, in the hope that his pursuers would pass by without discovering him.

It might succeed.

Dick decided to try it, at any rate.

He quickly slowed his horse down to a walk.

Then he leaped to the ground.

He led the horse out to one side of the road.

Then he brought the animal to a stop beside the fence.

Then, holding to the bridle rein, Dick patted his horse on the neck.

Dick feared the horse would neigh, or make some noise that would betray their presence to the pursuing horsemen.

The hoofbeats of the horses sounded close at hand now.

They sounded very loud, indeed, to Dick.

There was one thing in the youth's favor.

That was the darkness.

He was not afraid of the horsemen seeing him.

Closer and closer came the hoof beats.

The horses were now close at hand.

Dick tightened his grasp on the bridle rein, and patted the neck of his horse.

Now the horsemen were even with Dick; now they were past him.

The youth thought he was going to be successful in fooling his pursuers.

But it was not to be so.

Suddenly Dick's horse gave utterance to a shill neigh.

Dick heard exclamations escape the lips of the horsemen.

The sound of hoof beats suddenly ceased.

"They have stopped!" thought Dick; "I will either have to fight, or leave my horse, and flee across the field on foot."

Dick knew it would be useless to try to escape on horseback.

He had tried this, and had failed.

His horse was not speedy enough.

Dick could hear and understand what was being said by the men who had been pursuing him.

"He is trying to double on us, like a fox!" the youth heard one say.

"He expected that we would go past without finding out the trick he has played," from another.

"You will get my horse; but you won't get me!" said Dick to himself, grimly.

Then, as he heard the men riding toward him, he let go his hold on the rein, placed his hands on the top of the fence, leaped over and ran away across the field.

Dick heard the men calling on him to surrender, but as he was not there to do so, as the redcoats—as Dick suspected them to be—would soon learn.

A few moments later he heard wild yells of rage.

"They have discovered that I have given them the slip," thought Dick, grimly.

The youth felt safe now.

But he was sorry to lose his horse.

It would not be pleasant to have to walk ten miles through the night.

Suddenly the sound of three pistol shots was heard.

The men had fired at random into the darkness.

This gave Dick an idea.

He did not like the thought of losing his horse.

Neither did he like the prospect of the long walk.

The thought came to him that perhaps he might play a trick on the men and regain his horse.

As he heard the sound of the pistol shots, he gave utterance to a loud cry of well simulated pain.

He was very particular to make the cry loud enough to be heard by the men.

That they did hear it, was speedily proven.

Cries of joy went up from them.

"We've got him!"

"One of the bullets hit him!"

"That was his death cry!"

Such were the exclamations given utterance to by the men.

He accomplished his purpose.

He had made the fellows think they had killed or fatally wounded him.

He heard them scramble over the fence and come running toward him.

He did not wait to reach him.

He hastened away from the spot.

He made a short circuit, and reached the fence at a point not far from where he had left his horse.

He could hear the voices of the men.

They were searching for Dick over in the field.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK'S NEAT TRICK.

Dick climbed over the fence and walked down alongside it.

He soon came to the horses.

The men had thrown the bridle reins over posts.

Dick's horse had remained where the youth had left him standing.

He was tired, and then he had company.

Dick quickly lifted the bridle reins of his pursuers' horses from over the posts, and then, holding to the reins, he quickly mounted his horse and rode away, up the road in the direction he had been going, leading the three horses.

He could still hear the men talking in excited tones.

"I guess they wonder why they can't find me!" thought Dick, with a quiet laugh. "It will be a wild crowd when they find I have escaped and taken their horses!"

And again Dick laughed softly.

He had gone perhaps a third of a mile when he suddenly heard wild yells of rage from behind him.

"They've found out that they have been tricked at last!" thought Dick. "Well, I had better move a bit faster. They could overtake me at this rate, and that would be very bad for me!"

Dick at once urged his horse to a gallop.

It was somewhat hard to go at this gait, and lead the horses, but he managed it.

After he got the other horses to moving steadily, he had no difficulty.

Dick heard the yells of the men for several minutes, but the sound grew fainter and fainter.

He knew that he was safe, in so far as danger from those fellows was concerned.

"That little trick worked to perfection," thought Dick; "I am glad now, that those men did follow me. It has enabled me to secure three good horses for the use of the patriot soldiers."

Dick arrived at the patriot encampment at Whitemarsh at about one o'clock.

As soon as he had taken care of his horses, he went to the quarters occupied by the commander-in-chief.

He asked the orderly if General Washington had retired.

The orderly said he would see.

Dick knew the commander-in-chief was in the habit of remaining up till the small hours, planning and writing, and he thought it possible he was up yet, on this night. In that case, he would report to him at once.

The orderly returned in a few moments, and said that the commander-in-chief was just preparing to lie down, but would see Dick.

The youth entered the tent.

General Washington greeted Dick cordially.

"Well, Dick," he said, "what news? I am sure you have secured information of importance, or you would not have come here to report at this time of the night—or morning, rather."

"You are right, your excellency," said Dick; "I have secured some very valuable information, indeed."

"Good! Let me hear it, my boy!"

"Very well, your excellency: The British are to attack you in force on to-morrow night!"

There was almost an excited look in the usually calm, cool eyes of the great man.

"Ah!" he breathed; "so they are to attack us in force to-morrow night, are they?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Tell me all about it, Dick."

Dick proceeded to do so.

When he had finished, the commander-in-chief reached out and grasped Dick's hand.

He shook it warmly.

"Dick," he said, earnestly, "you have done splendidly! Your good spy work in Philadelphia has without doubt saved the patriot army from being badly defeated. Had the British succeeded in taking us by surprise, as they expected to do, we could not have stood against them at all. Now we shall, thanks to the information you have brought, be enabled to meet them on something like equal terms."

Dick flushed with pleasure.

"I have done the best that I could, your excellency," he said; "I am glad that I have been able to do something that will be of benefit to you and to the cause we all love so well."

"It will be of great benefit, Dick. In fact, you have practically saved the patriot army from defeat and almost ruin."

Dick remained a few minutes longer.

General Washington asked him a number of questions.

Dick answered them promptly.

"You may go now," remarked General Washington presently.

Then Dick bade the commander-in-chief good night, saluted and withdrew.

He went straight to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

He wrapped himself up in his army blanket and was soon asleep.

When his comrades found him there next morning, they greeted him joyously.

"When did you get back, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook eagerly.

"One o'clock this morning, Bob."

"At one o'clock!"

"Yes."

"Were you in Philadelphia, Dick?"

"I was, Bob."

"Right in the lion's den, eh?"

"Yes."

"Did you find out anything of importance, Dick?" asked Sam Sunderland.

"Yes, Sam. That's the reason I came back so soon."

"Good for you, Dick!" cried Bob; "I hope that we are to have a fight with the British!"

"And so do I!"

"And I."

"It's the same with me!"

"And with me!"

The "Liberty Boys" were never so happy as when in action.

They would rather fight than eat when they were hungry. The British could testify to this fact.

"I rather think we shall have a fight with the British, Bob," said Dick, quietly. "They are coming in force to-night to attack us."

"What!"

"Say you so, Dick?"

"Hurrah!" cried Bob. "We'll whip them out of their boots!"

"We will, that!" declared Mark Morrison.

"I think, myself, that we will be able to hold our own with them," said Dick.

"Yes, now that we know they are coming," said Sam Sunderland.

"I suppose they intended to take us by surprise, did they, Dick?" asked Joe Walton.

"Yes, such were their intentions, Joe."

"How did you find out that they intended to attack us, Dick?" asked another of the youths.

"I overheard them laying their plans."

"Say, Dick, you're a great one!" cried Bob, enthusiastically. "The British will have hard work catching us napping, while you're around."

Dick laughed.

"Oh, any of you boys could do as well as I," he said quietly.

"Not a bit of it!" declared Mark Morrison.

"We could never be as successful as you have been, Dick," said another.

None of the "Liberty Boys" were jealous of Dick.

On the contrary, they were proud of him.

Dick was so kind to them, was so noble hearted and generous, that they could not help loving him.

He was captain of the company of "Liberty Boys," and as commander, had never had a harsh word for any of them.

He controlled them by kindness, not by exercising the authority given him by superior rank.

That this was a good way to control the youths was evidenced whenever they became engaged in a battle.

Dick had but to command and his command would be obeyed.

He had but to lead and they would follow, even into the jaws of death.

Bob now asked Dick for the story of his adventures in Philadelphia.

Dick told them the story briefly.

He took but very little credit to himself.

He said that it was mainly due to luck that he had been successful in learning the plans of the British.

The youths would not have it that way, however.

They said that anyone else would not have been so lucky, and that the credit, therefore, was due to him.

Soon after breakfast, General Washington began issuing orders.

It was soon known throughout the camp that the British were to attack them during the coming night.

The patriot soldiers welcomed the news.

They were ready and willing to fight.

Anything was better than sitting around doing nothing.

All day long the work of getting the troops into position went on.

The commander-in-chief selected his ground carefully.

He arranged his troops with exceeding care.

His army would be outnumbered three to two, at least.

He would have to equalize this by placing his men in superior positions.

There was no one better capable of doing this than General Washington.

His judgment of position was infallible.

The soldiers were in good spirits.

The probability of getting into action and getting a chance to strike the British a severe blow was pleasing to them.

They knew that the British expected to surprise them.

They knew also that the British would be the ones to be surprised.

This knowledge gave them great pleasure.

"The redcoats will be badly fooled," they said to each other. "We'll make them wish they had stayed in Philadelphia!"

The "Liberty Boys" were perhaps more greatly pleased by the outlook than were any of the other soldiers.

They, too, told each other what they would do to the British.

It was really amusing to hear them talk.

One who did not know them or what they were capable of doing would have thought their talk was bravado; but, extravagant as some of their statements sounded, there is little doubt that they would make them good if they got the opportunity.

By evening the work of posting the troops was completed.

Generals Washington and Greene made the rounds and inspected the army just before nightfall.

They were well pleased.

"I think we shall be able to repulse the British, General Greene," said the commander-in-chief in a tone of satisfaction.

"I think so, your excellency," replied Greene. "To tell the truth, I doubt very much whether General Howe will attack when he sees we are ready for him. He is very cautious, you know."

"I am aware of that, General Greene, and it would not surprise me if you were right. Well, in case it turns out that way, it will simply be another proof that the way to avoid trouble is to be prepared for it."

"True, your excellency."

Night came on.

Double the usual number of pickets were put out.

Hour after hour passed.

The British did not put in an appearance.

The patriot soldiers wrapped themselves in their blankets and went to sleep.

Their slumber was not sound.

They would awaken at the least sound.

The night passed away, and still the British did not put in an appearance.

Could it be that they had given up the idea of attacking the patriots?

It began to look as if this was the case.

But it was not the case.

Just as day was breaking the pickets saw the British army approaching.

For some reason it had been delayed, and instead of reaching Whitemarsh in the night it was reaching them in the early morning.

The alarm was sounded at once.

The patriot soldiers leaped to their feet, weapons in hand, and drew themselves up in line of battle.

CHAPTER X.

THE BRITISH MARCH UP THE HILL—THEN MARCH DOWN.

"The British are coming!"

Such was the exclamation that went through the patriot army.

They had come at last.

Now would come the tug-of-war.

As far as General Washington was concerned, he felt well satisfied.

He preferred to fight in the daytime.

It was much easier to direct the movements of the army in daylight than when a night attack was being made.

But if General Washington was satisfied, General Howe was not.

He had expected to take the patriots by surprise.

And now, to find them drawn up in line of battle was anything but pleasing.

As soon as the British saw their approach was known in advance they came to a halt.

Generals Howe and Cornwallis wished to confer before doing anything further.

"What does this mean, General Cornwallis?" asked Howe, his face red and excited-looking. "The rebels must have had advance knowledge of the fact that they were to be attacked!"

"It would seem so, your excellency," admitted Cornwallis, a disappointed, moody look on his face.

"I don't understand it!"

"No more do I, your excellency."

The British generals were puzzled and disappointed.

They had counted confidently on surprising the "rebels."

Had they succeeded in doing so they would have been able to put them to rout.

They would have practically annihilated the patriot army.

But they had not succeeded in taking the patriots by surprise.

In some manner the "rebels" had learned that they were to be attacked.

How had they learned it?

This was the question which the British generals asked themselves and each other.

But they could not answer the question.

"What shall we do?" asked Howe. "Shall we attack them, anyway?"

"Just as your excellency says."

"What do you think? Do you think we could defeat them?"

"I think so, your excellency, but—"

"It would be a difficult matter, eh?"

"Undoubtedly. They are drawn up ready for battle, and, if you will notice, they have a very strong position."

"I have taken note of that fact, General Cornwallis."

The British generals were on the top of a hill perhaps a mile from the patriot army.

By the aid of General Howe's field glass they were enabled to get a good general view of the position occupied by the patriot troops.

What to do they did not know.

They hated the thought of having to return to Philadelphia without having struck a blow at the hated "rebels."

They had marched twelve long, weary miles; now to have to turn around and march back again without having accomplished anything would be galling in the extreme.

They did not wish to do this if they could help it.

General Howe raised the glass to his eyes and took a long look.

Then he turned again to Cornwallis:

"What do you suggest, General Cornwallis?" he asked.

The other was silent for a few moments.

Then he said:

"I'll tell you what we might do: We might throw forward a few skirmishing parties, just to see what the rebels will do."

This suggestion struck Howe as being a good one.

"Very well thought of," he said; "we will do that. Give the order at once."

Cornwallis called a couple of aids and gave them some orders, after which they rode away.

A short time afterward three or four skirmishing parties moved forward toward the position occupied by the patriot forces.

Washington and his officers were keeping close watch of the British.

They saw the skirmishing parties moving forward.

General Washington understood the matter as thoroughly as if he had heard the conversation between Howe and Cornwallis.

Summoning some of his aids, he gave them orders, and they departed at once, going in different directions.

The patriot soldiers understood affairs.

They were glad to see the skirmishing parties approaching.

If they could not engage in a real battle, it would at least afford them some pleasure to engage in skirmishes with the enemy.

The British advanced closer and closer.

As they drew nearer they became cautious and advanced more slowly.

Several parties of the patriot soldiers advanced to meet the approaching parties of British.

Soon the rattle of musketry was heard.

The skirmishing parties were exchanging shots.

This was kept up for perhaps half an hour.

A few on each side were killed and wounded.

The company of "Liberty Boys" was included in one of the skirmishing parties.

The party they were in was at the extreme right wing.

Exchanging shots with the British did not fully satisfy the youths.

They could not inflict damage enough on the British.

Finally Dick went to the commander of the skirmishing party, Colonel Butler by name, and asked permission to charge the skirmishing party of British.

Colonel Butler hesitated at first, but finally said:

"I will take the whole force and charge them. As your company of 'Liberty Boys' is in front, we will both lead the party."

Dick was delighted.

He thanked Colonel Butler earnestly.

Then he returned and took his place at the head of his company.

Colonel Butler gave some orders and then came and took his place beside Dick.

He waited a few minutes for his men to get ready.

Then he raised his sword in the air and gave the order to charge.

The men responded instantly.

They rushed forward like a human cyclone.

They gave utterance to wild shouts.

In front ran Colonel Butler and Dick.

Behind them came the company of "Liberty Boys" and the other members of the skirmishing party.

Evidently the party of British did not know what to think of this.

The redecoats had not expected any such action on the part of the "rebels."

They stood their ground, however.

They fired a volley when the patriots had covered perhaps half the distance.

Colonel Butler gave utterance to a cry of pain and fell to the ground.

Dick paused instantly.

He dropped on one knee beside the wounded man.

"Are you badly hurt, colonel?" he asked solicitously.

"Pretty bad, I am afraid, Dick, but don't mind me. You take command and go right on. I'll be all right."

Dick leaped to his feet.

He waved his sword and rushed onward.

"Follow me, my brave boys!" he cried. "Charge the redecoats! Charge bayonets!"

The "Liberty Boys" and their comrades gave vent to wild cheers.

They rushed forward after their young leader with renewed vigor.

They would follow Dick anywhere.

Seeing that the patriots were not to be stopped, the redecoats prepared to receive them.

A few moments later the patriots and redecoats came together with a crash.

There were wild shouts and curses.

The British tried to stand their ground but could not do it.

The patriots came with such force as to hurl the redecoats back in spite of themselves.

For a few minutes a lively combat raged.

Dick was here, there and everywhere.

He seemed to be invulnerable, invincible.

The "Liberty Boys" kept close to their young leader and fought with great energy and fierceness.

The British soon became demoralized.

The attack was too fierce.

They had not expected to be charged, in the first place, and they had not expected to be attacked with such fury even when they did see that they were to be charged.

They fought as long as they could.

Then they suddenly gave way, turned and started back toward the main force at their best speed.

Dick and his party chased the fleeing redcoats a short distance and then paused.

Then they gave vent to a wild cheer and returned to where the encounter had taken place.

They secured their dead and wounded and made their way back to the main force of the patriots.

This affair cast a damper on the British.

The other skirmishing parties withdrew.

Evidently they feared they would be charged also.

Generals Washington and Greene were well pleased.

"I rather think that will teach the British to be more careful, General Greene," said Washington, with a quiet smile.

"I think so, your excellency," agreed Greene.

And it so proved.

Generals Howe and Cornwallis were disconcerted by the manner in which the skirmishing party had been handled.

"I think we had better give up the idea of making an attack, General Cornwallis," said Howe. "What do you think?"

"It is for you to say, your excellency," was the reply.

"I have no doubt that we would be able to defeat them, but the victory would be dearly won."

"I judge that you are right; and I do not think it would be wise to engage them in battle. Washington's army will become disintegrated before the winter ends, anyway, and all we will have to do will be to return to Philadelphia and take it easy till next spring. The war will be a thing of the past by that time, and there is no need of causing the shedding of any more blood."

"I think you are right in your views, your excellency. I do not see how the rebel army can possibly live through the winter as an army. It will have to break up and dissolve, to keep the men from freezing and starving to death."

"That is the way I look at it."

So the British did not make another attack.

The army faced about and marched back in the direction of Philadelphia.

"Perhaps it is as well," said General Washington; "neither side could have accomplished much, and a great many men would have lost their lives. On the whole, I am glad Howe decided to return to Philadelphia without offering battle."

"I guess you are right in your views, your excellency," said General Greene.

The soldiers were disappointed, however.

They had hoped that there would be a general engagement.

Those who had been members of the skirmishing parties were fairly well satisfied, however.

They had been in action, and the members of the party that had charged the British had had some lively fighting.

General Washington complimented Dick on the successful manner in which he and his men had routed the skirmishing party, but the youth modestly disclaimed credit.

"Colonel Butler is entitled to more credit than I," he said; "he was in command, you know."

"Yes, but he was wounded and forced to fall out. You were the actual commander during the engagement."

General Washington always insisted on giving credit where credit was due.

This was one reason why he was so well liked by both officers and soldiers.

And he gave Dick credit for the result of the affair just ended. But for Dick's good spy work in Philadelphia the British might have surprised the patriots, and then the affair would have had an entirely different ending—one much less favorable to the Americans.

THE END.

The next number (28) of "Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' BATTLE CRY; OR, WITH WASHINGTON AT THE BRANDYWINE," by Harry Moore.

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